



SAN LUIS REY BAND OF MISSION INDIANS

Tribal Council

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September 23, 2013

Ms. Elizabeth Appel
Office of Regulatory Affairs & Collaborative Action
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW, MS
4141, Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Appel,

On behalf of the San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians, petitioner #096, I am writing to express our support for the proposed revisions to the Federal Acknowledgement of Indian Tribes (25 CFR 83) set forth in the preliminary discussion draft identified at 78 FR 38617 (June 27, 2013). The revisions to improve the federal acknowledgment process (FAP) proposed by the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs (AS-IA) are a critical step in the right direction towards improving the FAP while maintaining both stringent standards for core criteria and the integrity of the acknowledgment decisions.

We are certain that the Department seeks to make consistent, well-grounded decisions when acknowledging a petitioner's government-to-government relationship with the United States. We must however add our voice to the chorus of criticism of the FAP in its current incarnation. California Indian tribes face particular challenges under the FAP that are well documented in the assessment conducted by the Advisory Council on California Indian Policy Final Report and Recommendations to the Congress of the United States Pursuant to Public Law 102-416. With conviction and resolve, we stand with our fellow unacknowledged Indian nations in California and elsewhere and proclaim that fundamental changes to the FAP are long overdue. Among the proposed changes, we believe that the elimination of §§ 83.7(a) and 83.11 and streamlining revisions to § 83.8 are among the most significant and are entirely consistent with the Assistant Secretary's stated goal of improving the FAP.

We commend the AS-IA for his timely commitment to improve the transparency, efficiency, and flexibility to the FAP.

Sincerely,

Mel Vernon

Captain

San Luis Rey Band of Mission Indians